

# ANAPANASATI

## - MINDFULNESS WITH BREATHING

*Unveiling the Secrets of Life:*  
a Manual for Serious Beginners

by

BUDDHADASA BHIKKHU

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### **HOW DID THE LORD BUDDHA DWELL?**

*Bhikkhus, Mindfulness with Breathing that one has developed and make much of has great fruit and great benefit.*

*Even I myself, before awakening, when not yet enlightened, while still a Bodhisatva (Buddha to be), lived in this dwelling (way of life) for the most part. When I lived mainly in this dwelling, the body was not stressed, the eyes were not strained, and my mind was released from the asava (corruptions, cankers) through non-attachment.*

*For this reason, should anyone wish "may my body be not stressed, may my eyes be not strained, may my mind be released from the asava through non-attachment," then that person ought to attend carefully in his heart to this Mindfulness with Breathing meditation.*

(Samyutta-nikaya. Samyutta LIV, Sutta 8)

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*Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!*  
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**ANUMONDANA** 

(To all Dhamma Comrades, those helping to spread  
Dhamma:)

Break out the funds to spread Dhamma to let  
Faithful Trust flow,  
Broadcast majestic Dhamma to radiate long living joy.

Release unexcelled Dhamma to tap the spring of  
Virtue,  
Let safely peaceful delight flow like a cool mountain  
stream.

Dhamma leaves of many years sprouting anew,  
reaching out,  
To unfold and bloom in the Dhamma Centers of all towns,  
To spread lustrous Dhamma and in hearts glorified  
plant it,  
Before long, weeds of sorrow, pain, and affliction will flee.

As Virtue revives and resounds throughout Thai  
society,  
All hearts feel certain love toward those born, ageing, and  
dying.

Congratulations and Blessings to all Dhamma  
Comrades,  
You who share Dhamma to widen the people's prosperous  
joy.

Heartiest appreciation from Buddhadasa Indapanno,  
Buddhist Science ever shines beams of Bodhi longlasting,  
In grateful service, fruits of merit and wholesome  
successes,  
Are all devoted in honor to Lord Father Buddha,

Thus may the Thai people be renowned for their  
Virtue,  
May perfect success through Buddhist Science awaken their  
hearts,

May the King and His Family live long in  
triumphant strength,



May joy long endure throughout this our world upon earth.

from,

*Buddha dāsa*

Mokkhabalarama

Chaiya, 2 November 2530

(translated by Santikaro Bhikkhu, 3 February 2531 (1988))

## ***PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION***



This edition includes a complete translation of "The Mindfulness With Breathing Discourse" (Appendix E). We have added the introductory passages that were left out of the first edition. We also include Ajahn Buddhadasa's notes to the discourse. The full discourse and the notes will provide the reader with rich material for reflection and a fitting summary of this book, and of all Dhamma practice. The remainder of the text is unchanged, except for the correction of printing and spelling errors. Our thanks to everyone who has made this edition possible.

Santikaro Bhikkhu  
Suan Mokkhabalarama  
December 2531 (1988)

## ***TRANSLATOR-EDITOR'S PREFACE***



## Welcome to Mindfulness with Breathing.

Mindfulness with Breathing is a meditation technique anchored in our breathing, it is an exquisite tool for exploring life through subtle awareness and active investigation of the breathing and life. The breath is life, to stop breathing is to die. The breath is vital, natural, soothing, revealing. It is our constant companion. Wherever we go, at all times, the breath sustains life and provides the opportunity (or spiritual development). In practicing mindfulness upon and through the breathing, we develop and strengthen our mental abilities and spiritual qualities. We learn how to relax the body and calm the mind. As the mind quiets and clears, we investigate how life, how the mind and body, unfolds. We discover the fundamental reality of human existence and learn how to live our lives in harmony with that reality. And all the while, we are anchored in the breath, nourished and sustained by the breath, soothed and balanced by the breath, sensitive to the breathing in and breathing out. This is our practice.

Mindfulness with Breathing is the system of meditation or mental cultivation (*citta-bhavana*) often practiced and most often taught by the Buddha Gautama. For more than 2500 years, this practice has been preserved and passed along. It continues to be a vital part of the lives of practicing Buddhists in Asia and around the world. Similar practices are found in other religious traditions, too. In fact, forms of Mindfulness with Breathing predate the Buddha's appearance. These were perfected by him to encompass his most profound teachings and discoveries. Thus, the comprehensive form of Mindfulness with Breathing taught by him leads to the realization of humanity's highest potential – enlightenment. It has other fruits as well and so offers something - of both immediate and long term value, of both mundane and spiritual benefit - to people at all stages of spiritual development.

In the Pali language of the Buddhist scriptures this practice called "*Anapanasati*" which means "mindfulness with in-breaths and out-breaths." The complete system of practice is described in the Pali texts and further explained in their commentaries. Over the years, an extensive literature has developed. The Venerable Ajahn Buddhadasa has drawn on these 'sources, especially the Buddha's words, for his own practice. Out of that experience, he has given a wide variety of explanations about how and why to practice Mindfulness with Breathing. This book contains some of his most recent talks about this meditation practice.

The lectures included here were chosen for two reasons. First, they were given to Westerners attending the monthly meditation courses at Suan Mokkh. In speaking to Western meditators, Ajahn Buddhadasa uses a straight-forward, no-frills approach. He, need not, go into the cultural interests of traditional Thai Buddhists. Instead, he prefers a scientific, rational, analytic attitude. And rather than limit the instruction to Buddhists, he emphasizes the universal, natural humanness of *Anapanasati*. Further, he endeavors to respond to the needs, difficulties, questions, and abilities of

beginning Western meditators, especially our guests at Suan Mokkh.

Second, this manual is aimed at "serious, beginners." By "beginner" we mean people who are fairly new to this practice and its theory. Some, have just begun, while others have some practical experience but lack information about where and how to develop their practice further. Both can benefit from clear instructions concerning their current situation and the overall perspective. By "serious" we mean those who have an interest deeper than idle curiosity. They will read and reread this manual carefully, will think through this information adequately, and will apply the resulting understanding with sincerity and commitment. Although some people like to think that we do not have to read books about meditation, that we need only to do-it, we must be careful to know what it is we are doing. We must begin with some source of information, sufficiently clear and complete, to practice meaningfully. If we do not live with or near a competent teacher, a manual such as this is necessary. The beginner needs information simple enough to give a clear picture of the entire process, yet requires enough detail to turn the picture into reality. This manual should strike the proper balance. There is enough here to guide successful practice, but not so much as to complicate and overwhelm. Those who are serious will find what they need without difficulty.

The main body of this manual comes from the series of lectures given during our September 1986 meditation course. For this course, Ajahn Poh (Venerable Bodhi Buddhadhammo, the initiator of these courses and Suan Mokkh's Abbot) asked Ajahn Buddhadasa to give the meditation instruction directly. Each morning, after breakfast, the retreatants gathered at "the Curved Rock," Suan Mokkh's outdoor lecture area. Venerable Ajahn spoke in Thai, with this translator interpreting into English. The talks were recorded and many people, both foreign and Thai, requested copies of the series.

Early last year, Khun Wutichai Taweeksakiriphol and the Dhamma Study-Practice Group asked Venerable Ajahn for permission to publish both the Thai and English versions. Once the tapes were transcribed, however, it turned out that the original English interpretation was unsuitable for publication. It contained inaccuracies and was unnecessarily repetitive. Therefore, the original interpreter has revised his first attempt, or, we could say, translated it anew. This new rendering follows the original Thai closely, although some additions have been kept. Anyone who compares this version with the tapes will appreciate the improvement.

In the course of revision and preparation, we decided to append material to make the manual more comprehensive. In more recent talks, Ajahn Buddhadasa has discussed perspectives on *Anapanasati* not covered in the September talks. Appendices A, B, and C are selections from three of these talks, with the parts that repeat material covered in earlier talks edited out. This new information emphasizes the significance and purpose of *Anapanasati*. Appendix D is a

substantial revision of a talk given by the interpreter as a summary of Venerable Ajahn's seven lectures. Appendix E leaves the final word with our prime inspiration and original source - the Lord Buddha's "Mindfulness with Breathing Discourse (*Anapanasati Sutta*).\" The heart of the fundamental text for this system of meditation is presented here in a new translation. We hope, that the exquisite simplicity and directness of the Blessed One's words will gather all of the preceding explanations into one clear focus. That focus, of course, must aim at the only real purpose there is in life - *nibbana*.

If you have yet to sit down and "watch" your breaths, this book will point out why you should, and how. Still, until you try it, and keep trying, it will be impossible to completely understand these words. So read this book through at least once, or however many times it takes to get the gist of the practice. Then, as you practice, read and reread the sections most relevant to what you are doing and are about to do. These words will become tangible only through applying them, and thus strengthened they will guide the development more securely. You need enough intellectual understanding to be clear about what you need to do and how to go about it. While focusing on the immediate requirements of today's learning, do not lose sight of the overall path, structure, method, and goal. Then you will practice with confidence and success.

In addition to its primary purpose, teaching how to practice *Anapanasati* correctly, this manual serves a purpose which the casual reader will overlook. With the careful study advocated above, however, you will discover that every central teaching of Buddhism, true Buddhism in its pristine form, is mentioned here. This book, then, provides an outline of the essential teachings. In this way our intellectual study is neatly integrated with our mental cultivation practice. For how could we separate the two? To fully understand our practice we must do our Dhamma homework, and vice versa.

Having both in one place should help those who are confused about what and how much to study. Just make sure that you understand all the things discussed here, that is enough.

The benefits of correct, sustained *Anapanasati* practice are numerous. Some are specifically religious and others are mundane. Although Ajahn Buddhadasa covers them extensively in the seventh lecture, we should mention a few here at the beginning. First, *Anapanasati* is good for our health, both physical and mental. Long, deep, peaceful breathing is good for the body. Proper breathing calms us down and helps us to let go of the tension, high blood pressure, nervousness, and ulcers that ruin so many lives these days. We can learn the simple and beautiful act of sitting quietly alive to the breathing, free of stress, worry, and busyness. This gentle calm can be maintained in our other daily activities and will allow us to do everything with more grace and skill.

*Anapanasati* brings us into touch with reality and nature. We often live in our heads - in ideas, dreams, memories, plans, words, and all that. So we do not have the opportunity to understand our own bodies even, never taking the time to observe them (except when the excitement of illness and sex occurs). In *Anapanasati*, through the breathing, we become sensitive to our bodies and their nature. We ground ourselves in this basic reality of human existence, which provides the stability we need to cope wisely with feelings, emotions, thoughts, memories, and all the rest of our inner conditioning. No longer blown about by these experiences, we can accept them for what they are and learn the lesson they have to teach us. We begin to learn what is what, what is real and what is not, what is necessary and what is unnecessary, what is conflict and what is peace.

With *Anapanasati* we learn to live in the present moment, the only place one can truly live. Dwelling in the past, which has died, or dreaming in the future, which brings death, is not really living as a human being ought to live. Each breath, however, is a living reality within the boundless here-now. To be aware of them is to live, ready to grow into and with whatever comes next.

Lastly, as far as this brief discussion is concerned, *Anapanasati* helps us to ease up on and let go of the selfishness that is destroying our lives and world. Our societies and planet are tortured by the lack of peace. The problem is so serious that even politicians and the military-industrialists pay lip-service to it. Still, nothing much is done to blossom genuine peace. Merely external (and superficial) approaches are taken, while the source of conflict is within us, each of us. The conflict, strife, struggle, and competition, all the violence and crime, the exploitation and dishonesty, arises out of our selfcentered striving, which is born out of our selfish thinking. *Anapanasati* will get us to the bottom of this nasty "I-ing" and "my-ing" which spawns selfishness. There is no need to shout for peace when we merely need breath with wise awareness.

Many people who share our aspiration for peace, within both individual hearts and the world we share, visit Suan Mokkh. We offer this manual to them and all others who seek the Lord Buddha's path of peace, who accept this the duty and joy of all human beings. We hope that this book will enrich your practice of *Anapanasati* and your life. May we all realize the purpose for which we were born.

Santikaro Bhikkhu  
Suan Mokkhabalarama  
New Year's 2531 (1988)

## ***ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS***

Dhamma projects give us opportunities to join together in meritorious work and the service of our comrades in birth, ageing, illness, and death. A number of friends have given freely of their energy, time, and skills. Although there is no better reward than the contentment and peace that comes with doing our duty in Dhamma, nevertheless, we would like to acknowledge and bless their contributions.

The Thai manuscript was transcribed by Jiaranai Lansuchip.

The English manuscript was transcribed by Supis Vajjanarat and edited the first time by Pradittha Siripan.

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The Thai and English language typing was done by Supis Vajjanarat.

Miscellaneous errands were run by Wutichi Taveesaksiriphol and Phra Dusadee Metamkuro.

Funds for the first printing of this manual were donated by Dr. Priya Tasatiapradit, Amnuey Suwankiri, Supis Vajjanarat, and The Dhamma Study-Practice Group.

Ajahn Poh (Bodhi Buddhadhammo) and Ajahn Runjuan Indrakamhaeng of Suan Mokkh have nurtured and guided the environment wherein these lectures and this book have arisen.

Ajahn Buddhadasa, in line with the Blessed One's purpose, gives us the example and inspiration for a life of Dhamma service, which we humbly try to emulate in ways such as putting together this manual.

Lastly, Mrs. Pratum Juanwiwat supplies much of the friendship and material support (paper, pens, photocopying, medicine, food) needed to keep the translator's life and work rolling.

Phra Dusadee Metamkuro  
Suan Mokkhabalarama  
Chaiya, Surat Thani, Thailand  
Twelfth Lunar Month 2530 (1987)

## ***TEXTUAL NOTES***



**PALI TERMS:** Ajahn Buddhadasa feels that committed students of Dhamma should become familiar with and deepen their understanding of important Pali terms. Translations often miss some or much, of the original meaning (e.g. *dukkha*). By learning the Pali terms, we can explore the various meanings and connotations that arise in different contexts. Here, you will find them explained and sometimes translated (although not always in the same way) both in the text and in the glossary.

Pali has both singular and plural inflections but Thai does not. The Pali-Thai terms herein are used like the English "sheep", sometimes with an article and sometimes not. Depending on the context and meaning, you can decide which cases are appropriate: singular, plural, both, or numberless.

Generally, Pali terms are italicized. A few of the more frequent and important terms, especially those that are difficult or cumbersome to translate, are not italicized. These are words which fill gaps in the English language, so we offer them as additions to English dictionaries. Some of these words are *Buddha*, *Dhamma*, *Sangha*, *Anapanasati*, *dhamma*, and *dukkha*.

Pali and Thai scripts do not use capital letters. In general, we only capitalize Pali terms when they begin a sentence. The exceptions are some of the non-italicized words.

**NUMBERING:** The Thai and English versions of this work are being published almost simultaneously. To enable easy reference between the two, and with the original tapes, we have numbered each spoken passage. In the original, Ajahn

Buddhadasa sometimes spoke only a sentence or two then paused for the interpreter. Other times, he spoke at length before giving the interpreter a chance. Each of these passages is given its own number. When these passages are referred to in the text, they are designated with a capital "P." (Page references use a lower-case "p"). Appendices A, S, and C are numbered in the same way, but do not correspond to the tapes exactly, because some passages have been left out. Appendix D is numbered although it differs greatly from the tape and is not included in the Thai version.

FOOTNOTES: All have been added by the translator.

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## LECTURE ONE: WHY DHAMMA?



"Why Dhamma?"

Before answering this question we need to understand the meaning of Dhamma. Then the reasons why we must study and practice Dhamma can be discussed. (1)

### **DHAMMA AND THE SECRETS OF LIFE**

An easy to understand explanation of Dhamma is "the secret of nature which must be understood in order to develop life to the highest possible benefit." (2)

To develop life to the highest level means reaching a stage of life that is free from all problem and all *dukkha*. Such a life is completely free from everything that could be signified by the words "problem" & "*dukkha*." (3)

A clarification of the word "secret" is important to the understanding of our topic. If we do not know the secret of something then we are unable to practise successfully to obtain the highest results and maximum benefits from it. For example, progress in the exploration of outer space, and developments in nuclear power, as well as other areas, have



been possible through the understanding of the secrets of these things. The same thing is true of life. In order to reach the highest possible development of life we must know life's secrets. (4)

Life, especially in the context of Dhamma, is a matter of nature (*dhamma-jati*). This Pali word *dhamma-jati* may not correspond to the English "nature" exactly, but they are close enough. Take it to mean something which exists within itself, by itself, of itself, and as its own law. This sense of nature is not opposed to man as some Westerners would have it, but encompasses man and all that he experiences. We must understand the secret of the nature of life, which is to understand Dhamma. (5)

### **DHAMMA: FOUR ASPECTS**

The Dhamma of life has four meanings:

1. nature itself,
2. the law of nature,
3. the duty that must be performed according to that law of nature,
4. the fruits or benefits that arise from the performance of that duty.

Always keep these four interrelated meanings in mind. (6)

Please investigate that Truth within yourselves, in this body and mind that you imagine to be yourselves. Within each of us are various natures compounded into a body, into a being. Then there is the law of nature that controls those natures. And there is the duty that must be performed correctly by and for all things regarding the law of nature. Lastly, there are the results of the performance of that duty. If the duty is performed correctly, the result will be well-being, tranquility, and ease. If the duty is performed incorrectly, however, the result will be *dukkha* - unsatisfactoriness, anguish, pain, frustration. Even at this beginning level, please observe carefully and see clearly that within each one of us there are all four aspects of Dhamma or nature. (7)

When we have investigated these four meanings of nature completely, we will see that life is made up of just these four aspects of nature. Now, however, we have yet to understand them correctly and completely. We have not truly

penetrated into the secret of what we call life. We have not grasped the secret of Dhamma, so we are unable to practice in a way that gets the fullest benefit from life. Let us take the time to study the words "Dhamma" and "secret of life" enough that we may take advantage of them. (8)

### **DEVELOPING LIFE BEYOND *DUKKHA***

We must also consider the phrase "developing life." We do not know the secret of this, either. When we talk about developing life, we do not have a clear understanding of what we meant and have little understanding of the extent to which life truly can be developed. We do not realize the highest benefits that are available to mankind, and so we do not take much interest in the secrets of life which enable us to reach those highest levels. You ought to understand how far life can be developed, to what highest degree, and be especially interested in that development. (9)

On this beginning level, we need only to hold to the basic principle that "developing life" means causing life to progress to the highest level, that is, beyond all problems and *dukkha*, beyond the possible meanings and gradations of these two words. For those who have never heard the word "*dukkha*" before, we can tentatively translate it as "suffering, unsatisfactoriness, conflict, agitation - all the things that disturb life." *Dukkha* is what we are running from all the time.

It is what interferes with a life of calm and ease. It is anything that interferes with spiritual perfection. When life is developed beyond all *dukkha*, then life reaches its highest possible level. (10)

Now, some people do not know about their own problems. They do not understand what *dukkha* is, whether in general terms or in their own life. They look at themselves and say, "Oh! I don't have any problems, everything is OK." They accept all their difficulties and sorrow as normal and ordinary. Are we like that? We need to take a serious, detailed look into our own lives to see if there really is anything that could be called "a problem." Is there any *dukkha*? Is there anything dissatisfying or disturbing about life? Such questions are necessary when we come to a place like Suan Mokkh. If you have not looked inside, if you are unaware of any problems, if you feel no *dukkha*, then you do not know what you are doing here or what your reason is for studying Dhamma. Please, take a good, clear look at these things called "problems" and "*dukkha*" before proceeding any further. (11)

When we talk about developing life, we can distinguish four aspects of it. The first aspect is to prevent things that are dangerous to life from arising. The second is to get rid of and destroy any dangerous things that already have arisen in life. The third is to produce things which are useful and beneficial for life. The fourth is to maintain and preserve those things so that they grow further. Altogether we have the four aspects of developing life: preventing new dangers, getting rid of old dangers, creating desirable things, and maintaining and increasing the beneficial things. These make up what

we call "developing life." (12)

Developing life is our duty. We must realize that it is our duty if such development is to happen. (13)

In order to fulfill our duty we must have in our possession four very important dhammas,\* four Dhamma tools. These four tools of Dhamma are *sati* (reflective awareness or mindfulness), *sampajanna* (wisdom-in-action or ready comprehension), *panna* (wisdom or knowledge) and *samadhi* (concentration). Having these four tools will enable us to develop life. (14)

\* [In some contexts, "dhamma" merely means "thing." In such cases. We do not capitalize it. (Pali and Thai do not use capital letters.)]

The practice of *vipassana* or mind-development aims at cultivating and training the mind so that these four Dhamma tools are enriched enough to develop our lives. We ought to take an interest in studying the mental development of these four necessary dhammas. (15)

### **THE KIND OF ANAPANASATI WE NEED**

There are many different kinds of mental development or *vipassana*. Many different systems and techniques for training the mind exist. But of all the techniques which we have come across, the best is called *Anapanasati-bhavana*, the cultivation of mindfulness with breathing in and out. This is the practice that we will discuss in detail throughout these lectures. (16)

The correct and complete meaning of *Anapanasati-bhavana* to take one truth or reality of nature and then observe, investigate, and scrutinize it within the mind with every inhalation and every exhalation. Thus, mindfulness with breathing allows us to contemplate my important natural truth while breathing in and breathing out. (17)

Such study is very important and of great value. If we aspire to know the truth regarding something, we must take the truth of that matter to contemplate, examine, analyze, and study wholeheartedly every time we breathe in and out. Let me repeat that the object must be worked on continuously within the mind. Here, "continuously" means "with every in and out breath." Breathing in, know that object. Breathing out, know that object. Breathing in, understand that thing. Breathing out, understand that thing. This is most necessary, as well as extremely beneficial, for sufficiently developing any knowledge that must be understood. Such study brings about a transformation in the mind-heart, that is to say, on

the inside of life. (18)

Actually, the meaning of "*Anapanasati*" is quite broad and general. It means "to recollect with *sati* anything at all while breathing in and breathing out." Imagine that you are thinking about your home in some foreign country while breathing in and breathing out; or about your mother, wife, husband, children, or family while you are breathing in and breathing out. That could be called "*Anapanasati*," also. But that is not what we need to do here. What we require is to recollect Dhamma, that is, the natural truths which will free the mind from the suffering of *dukkha*. Take those truths to work upon in the mind well enough and completely enough to get rid of all our problems and eliminate *dukkha*. In other words, acquire the four Dhamma tools mentioned earlier. This is the kind of *Anapanasati* which is the most useful. (19)

#### **FOUR THINGS WE OUGHT TO CONTEMPLATE**

Now, we come to the question, what things are proper, correct, and necessary to take as objects to contemplate every time we breathe in and breathe out? The answer is the secrets of the thing called '*kaya* (body),' the secrets of the thing called '*vedana* (feeling),' the secrets of the thing called '*citta* (mind),' and the secrets of the thing called '*Dhamma*.' The secrets of these four things are to be brought into the mind and studied there. (20)

These things are important enough for you to memorize their Pali names. For your own clear understanding and future reference remember these words: *kaya*, *vedana*, *citta*, and *Dhamma*. Remember them as our four most important topics. We must use these four things far more than any other kinds of objects to train and develop the mind, because these four things already exist within us and are the sources of all the problems in our lives. Because we do not understand them and because we cannot regulate\* them, they become the things that lead to suffering. Therefore it is absolutely necessary to clearly distinguish and understand these four things: body, feeling, mind, and Dhamma. (21)

\* [*The Thai word kuab-kum is used throughout these talks. It can be translated 'to regulate; to control or confine; to oversee, supervise, or superintend.'* When one of these translations appear, all of the rest should be understood. In all cases, *kuab-kum* depends on *sati* and wisdom, never force or will-power.]

#### **STAGE ONE: FLESH-BODY AND BREATH-BODY**

Now, let us examine these four separately, beginning with *kaya*. The Pali word "*kaya*" literally means "group" and can be applied to any collection of things. In this case *kaya* means specifically the groups of things that are compounded together into a physical flesh-and-blood body. In fact, our English word "body" can also mean group. So we must be

careful of what group is meant.

You ought to look for yourselves to see what these bodies are made out of. What organs are there and how many of them? What kind of elements? What sort of parts and components come together into a body? Further, there is one very important component which nourishes the rest of this body, namely, the breath. The breath also called "*kaya*" in that it is a group of various elements. We will study how this flesh-body is established and how it is related to the breath.

The breath-body is very important because we can see that it sustains life in the rest of the body. And here we have the crucial relationship that we need to study. The general body, this flesh-body, is something that cannot be regulated directly. Such is not within our ability. However, there is a way to control it, to master it, indirectly by using the breath. If we act in a certain way toward one body (breath), there will be a certain effect upon another body (flesh). This is why we take the breath as the training object. Supervising the breath to whatever degree is equal to regulating the flesh body to that degree. This point will appear to you most distinctly when you have trained up to that particular stage of  
*Anapanasati*. (22)

In the first steps of this practice, those concerned with the *kaya* (body), we study the breath in a special way. We note every kind of breath that occurs and study what each is like. Long breaths, short breaths, calm breaths, violent breaths, fast breaths, and slow breaths: we must know them all. Of all the different kinds of breath which arise, know what nature each one has, know its characteristics, and know its functions.

Observe what influence the different breaths have upon the flesh-body. The breath has a great influence on the rest of the physical body and this influence needs to be seen clearly. Observe both sides of the relationship until it is obvious that they are interconnected and inseparable. See that the breath-body conditions and concocts the flesh-body. That is the first step. Make a special study of the breath. Know the characteristics of all its different forms. Then understand that it is connected to this flesh-body too. This will allow us to regulate the flesh-body by means of regulating the breath. (23)

The meaning of these first steps of this practice is to know the secrets of the *kaya*, the body. We know that the breath-body, the breathing, is the conditioner of the flesh-body. This important secret can be used to unlock other secrets about the body, such as, the fact that we can use the breath to gain mastery over the body. Nobody can sit here and directly relax the body, but we discover that we can relax the flesh-body by making the breath calm. If the breathing is calm, the flesh-body will be calm. This is how we can control the body indirectly. Further, we know that there is happiness and

joy and other valuable benefits in the calming of the breath and flesh bodies. (24)

## STAGE TWO: OUR MASTERS THE FEELINGS

Once we understand the secrets of the *kaya*, we turn to the secrets of the *vedana*. The *vedana* have the highest power and influence over human beings, over all living things. My words will surprise you, nonetheless, the entire world - animals, humans, and all living beings – depends on the *vedana*. They all are under the power of the feelings. This sounds funny and unbelievable, so examine it for yourselves. It is a fact that we - our entire species – are being forced by the *vedana* to do their bidding. When there are *sukha-vedana* (*pleasant* feelings) we try to get more of those feelings. The *pleasant* feelings always pull the mind in a certain direction and condition certain kinds of activity. *Dukkha-vedana* (*unpleasant*, disagreeable feelings) affect the mind and influence life in the opposite direction, but still lead to all kinds of habitual responses. The mind struggles with them and turns them into problems that cause *dukkha*. The feelings have great power over what we do. The whole world is under the command of these *vedana*, although there may be other factors involved as well. For example, while *tanha* (craving) can control the mind, craving itself is first conditioned by feeling. Thus, the *vedana* have the strongest and most powerful influence over our entire mind. We ought to understand the secrets of *vedana*. (25)

I will say something at which you can laugh if you wish, "If we can master the *vedana* we will be able to master the world." We will be able to control the world, when we can control the feelings as we require. Then we could supervise the world as it so badly needs. Now, nobody is interested in controlling the *vedana*, so the world has gotten out of proper control. Have you seen all the crises and problems that arise constantly? The wars, the famines, the corruption, the pollution, all these things, are activities originating in our failure to control the feelings from the start. If we would control the feelings, then we could control the world. This is something you need to consider. (26)

If we speak in line with the Lord Buddha's words, we say that the causes of everything in the world are centered on the *vedana*. The myriad activities happen in the world because our feeling of the *vedana* forces us to desire, and then act out those desires. Even such beliefs as reincarnation and rebirth are conditioned by the *vedana*. If we believe, we travel around in the samsaric cycle, the cycles of birth and death, of heaven and hell. Everything originates in feeling. To control the *vedana* is to control the origin, the source, the birth place of all things. This is how necessary it is to understand these feelings correctly and comprehensively. Then, we will be able to control them and their secrets will not deceive us into doing anything foolish ever again. (27)

There are three main points to realize regarding the *vedana*. First, understand the *vedana* themselves, the things that

cause feeling in the mind, that the mind feels. Second, know how the *vedana* condition the *citta*, the mind-heart. They stir up thoughts, memories, words, and actions. Know this concocting of the mind. Third, discover that we can control the mind by controlling the *vedana*, in the same way that the flesh-body is controlled by the regulation of the breath. Then we will be able to master the mind by correctly mastering the feelings which condition it. These three things make up the secrets of the *vedana*.

1. Understand the feelings themselves.
2. Know the things that condition the feelings.
3. Then, know how to control those things that condition the feelings, which is the same as controlling the feelings themselves.

These are the three important things to understand about *vedana*. (28)

Since the first and second stages of practice both follow the same principle, it is helpful to compare the two. In the stage regarding the body, we find out what it is that conditions the flesh-body, and then we study that thing. We study that body-conditioner until we know it in great detail. We study how that thing conditions the body. Then, by regulating that thing, we can control the body. This is our way to make the body more calm and peaceful. As for the mind, its conditioner is the feelings. By controlling the *vedana* so that they do not condition or stir up the mind, or so that they condition the mind in a desirable way, we are able to calm the mind. This how the first stage regarding the *kaya* and the second stage regarding the *vedana* follow the same basic principle and are parallel in their method of practice. (29)

### **STAGE THREE: THE SUBTLE MIND**

First, we practice to know the secrets of the *kaya*. Second, we practice to know the secrets of the *vedana*. Then, after fully mastering the first and second stages, we will practice in order to know the secrets of the *citta* (Thai, *cit*). The mind is the director and leader of life. The mind leads and the body is merely the tool which is led. If life is to be lead upon the correct path, we must understand the *citta* correctly until we are able to control it. This will require a special study, because this thing we call, "mind" is very subtle, complex, and profound. We cannot see it with our eyes, something special is needed to 'see' it. With well-trained *sati* such a study is fully within our ability, but we must put forth special effort. Do not lose heart or give up! All of us are capable of studying the *citta* so that we learn its secrets.

It is impossible to know the *citta* directly. We cannot touch it or make contact with it directly. It is possible however, to know it through its thoughts. If we know how the thoughts are, we will know how the mind is. In the material world, for comparison, we cannot know the thing electricity in itself. Instead, we know electricity through its properties: current, voltage, power, et cetera. So it is with the *citta*. We cannot experience it directly but we can experience its properties, the various thoughts. During each day how many different kinds of thoughts are arising, how many levels of thoughts come up? Observe these different thoughts. This is how we know the *citta*, first of all. (31)

We begin our study of the mind by observing what kind of thoughts it has. In what ways are its thoughts improper and in what ways correct? Are those thoughts defiled or undefiled? Does it think along correct lines or incorrect lines, good lines or wicked lines? Observe until the *citta* is understood through all the types of thought that it can think. That's it!

Know this truth just a little bit first, that the nature (*dhamma-jati*) of the mind is like this. At this stage, due to our training of the *kaya* and the *vedana* (conditioner of the mind), we are able to direct the mind as we require. The mind can be made to think in different ways or can be kept still. We can make the mind satisfied, or even dissatisfied, if we want. The mind can experience different kinds of happiness and joy. It can be stilled, calmed, and concentrated in different ways and to different degrees. Finally, the mind can be liberated. We make it let go of things with which it has fallen into loving, hating, and attaching. The mind is liberated from all those things. This is our lesson about the secrets of the mind which we must practice in stage three of *Anapanasati-bhavana*.

Know all the different kinds of *citta*. Be able to make the mind glad and content. Then force the mind to stop and be still. Lastly, make the mind let go of its attachments. Force it to let go. It lets go of things it attaches to and the things that attach to the *citta* let go of it. This is what it takes to be expert, to be well versed, in matters of the mind, in the third lesson of *Anapanasati*. (32)

#### **STAGE FOUR: REALIZING THE SUPREME DHAMMA**

After having learned the secrets of the body, the feelings, and the mind, we come to the fourth stage, which is about Dhamma. As mentioned earlier, Dhamma is nature in all its meanings. Now, take the truth of all those things, the ultimate truth of all natures, to study. This is what is meant by "studying Dhamma." It is to study the truth, the fact, which is the supreme secret of nature. With that knowledge we can live life in the best way. We ought to study the secret of the truth that controls life, the truth of *aniccam*, *dukkham*, *anatta*, *sunnata*, and *tathata*.



*Aniccama:* know that all conditioned things are impermanent and in flux.

*Dukkham:* know that all concocted things are inherently unable to satisfy our desires.

*Anatta:* know that all things are not-self, not-soul.

*Sunnata:* know that everything is void of selfhood of "I" and "mine."

*Tathata:* know the thusness, the suchness of all things.

Together, these are the one ultimate Truth. We must watch these things until they are fully realized in order that the mind will never again lose its way. When the mind understands this truth of all reality, then the mind will make no errors and will keep itself on the path of correctness. (33)

It may sound funny to you that all Truth - *aniccam, dukkham, anatta, sunnata* -- ends up with *tathata*. It may amuse you that the Ultimate Truth of everything in the universe comes down to nothing but thusness. In Thai, *tathata* is translated "just like that." It is more difficult in English: "just such, only thus, thusness. Isn't it funny? All Truth boils down to the typical, ordinary words "everything is just like that." Nothing is regarded as good or bad, wrong or right, gain or loss, defeat or victory, merit or sin, happiness or suffering, having or lacking, positive or negative, when we see thusness, the highest Dhamma. The highest Dhamma is right here in "merely thus," for thusness is above and beyond all meanings of positive and negative, above all meanings of optimism and pessimism, beyond all dualities. This is the finish. The Truth to be known in stage four is the secret of nature that says all things are 'only thus - merely such'. (34)

To see Dhamma sufficiently is the first step. That is just the first step. Now, we will see that the mind begins to let go, begins to loosen up its attachments. These attachments will dissolve away. This will be experienced until the step where attachment is extinguished. Once attachment is quenched, the final step is to experience that "the mind is free, everything is free." However, the texts use the words "throwing" back." The Buddha said that at the end we throw everything back. The meaning of this is that we have been thieves all our lives by taking the things of nature to be "I" and "mine." We have been stupid and we suffer for it. Now, we have become wise and are able to give things up. We give it all back to nature and never steal anything ever again. At this last step of practice we realize, "Oh! It's nature's not mine." Then we can throw everything back to nature.

The last step ends in this amusing way. It ends with us not being a thief anymore, with freedom from any and all

effects and influences of attachment. The final step of the development of *Anapanasati* finishes here. To learn the secret of Dhamma is to know that nothing should be attached to, and then not attach to anything. All is liberated. The case is closed. We are finished. (35)

If we choose to give this a name, we can call it "emancipation" or "salvation." It seems that all religions have the same thing as their goal and call it by pretty much the same names. For us, the meaning just described - ending attachment and throwing everything back to nature - is our understanding of emancipation. Other religions may give some other meaning to the word emancipation, who knows? In Buddhism, emancipation means to be free from every type and form of attachment so that we may live our lives above the world. Although our bodies are in this world, our minds are beyond it. Thus, all our problems disappear. This is how to develop life to its fullest potential using this four-stage method of practice. There are many more details to consider, but we will leave them for later.

Today, we have given a general outline of what happens in this way of practice. With this background it should be easy to practice each step as we come to it. May we end today's lecture here. (36)

## **LECTURE TWO: *GETTING STARTED***



In today's lecture we will talk about the practice of stage one of *Anapanasati* concerning the *kaya*. But let me warn you in advance that there are altogether four groups of things that we must contemplate. Each group includes four things or dhammas. That makes a total of sixteen dhammas. Of those sixteen, only two are the breathing itself. The breath is contemplated directly in only two steps. The remaining fourteen steps focus on other things. In all, there are four parts or tetrads, each of which contains four steps. Today, we will speak about the first two steps of the first tetrad, the practice concerning the *kaya* (body). (37)

### **PHYSICAL PREPARATIONS**

We will begin at the very start with the preparations for practicing *Anapanasati*. First, we must choose a location or place that is suitable and appropriate for our practice. We choose the best available place knowing that we can never have a perfect situation. We try to find a place that is quiet and peaceful, where the conditions and the weather are good,

where there are no disturbances.

But when good conditions are not available, we do the best we can with what we have. We must choose something, somewhere. We must be able to practice even when sitting on the train coming down from Bangkok. Sometimes we can focus on the breath until we do not hear the noise of the train and do not feel the shaking as it moves. That shows that we can choose a location and use the conditions available to us in the best possible way. (38)

We are not going to be defeated by any circumstances. Even on the train. Whether we have perfect conditions or not, we will make the most of them and do what we can. When we want to practice, we can use the sound of the train itself as a meditation object. The "clack-clack-clack" of the wheels on the rails can be our meditation object instead of the breath. In this way we have no objections about any location in the world, whether it is most proper or not very proper.

We have no excuses regarding our choice of a proper location. (39)

The next preliminary step is to prepare the body. We need bodies which are sufficiently normal, free of disease, and without any respiratory or digestive abnormalities. More specifically, we can prepare the nose so that it functions smoothly and correctly. In ancient times, they took some clean water in the palm of the hand, drew it up into the nose, and then blew it out. If we do this two or three times, the nose will be clean and prepared to breathe well. The nose will then be much more sensitive to the breath. This is an example of getting our bodies ready. (40)

## **TIME AND TEACHER**

Next, I would like to speak about time, and preparing the time of Practice. Especially when we are determined to practice earnestly, we need to choose the most suitable and appropriate time that we can find. If however, we cannot find a good time, we accept whatever we can get. We do not have to be enslaved to a certain time of day. When possible, we choose a time when there are no distractions and disturbances. When there is no time, however, that is completely free of distractions, we use the best time available. Then the mind learns to be undistracted regardless of

how many disturbances there are. Actually, we are training the mind to be undisturbed no matter what is going on around us. The mind will learn to be peaceful. Do not limit yourself to any certain time, when things must be just right, and you will never find it. Some people do this until they cannot find any time to meditate. That is not right. Always be flexible to practice at any time. (41)

The next consideration is what they call an "*acariya* (teacher, master)". But in truth, even in the old training systems, they did not talk much about "*acariya*." They called such a person a "good friend (*kalyana-mitta*)."  
To say "friend" - an advisor who can help us with certain things - is correct. We should not forget, however, principle that no one can help someone else directly. Yet nowadays, everyone wants to have a teacher to supervise them! A good friend is someone who has extensive personal experience and knowledge about the meditation practice or whatever else it is that we are striving to do. Although he is able to answer questions and explain some difficulties, it is not necessary for him to sit over us and supervise every breath. A good friend who will answer questions and help us work through certain obstacles is more than enough. To have such a *kalyana-mitta* is one more thing to arrange. (42)

### **SITTING POSTURE**

Now we come to the actual activity of meditation itself. The first thing to discuss is the sitting posture (See Figure 1). It is necessary to sit in a way that is stable and secure, so that when the mind is semi-conscious we will not fall over. Be able to sit just like a pyramid. Pyramids cannot fall over because they have a very solid base and sides that rise up into a central pinnacle. There is no way that they can fall down. Consider how long the pyramids in Egypt have been sitting! Learn to sit like a pyramid. The best way to do this is to sit cross-legged. Put your legs out in front of you, then pull the right foot up onto the left thigh and the left foot up onto the right thigh. These who have never sat this way, who may not even be used to sitting on the floor, may need some time to train the body to sit in this way, but it is worth the effort! You can patiently, gradually train yourself to sit in this way. Then you will not fall over. It will be impossible to fall forwards, backwards or sideways. From ancient times this way of sitting has been called "the lotus posture (*padmasana*)."



SITTING POSTURES

## **Anapanasati**

[Keeping the Breath in Mind and Lessons in Samadhi](#) - by Ajahn Lee Dhammadharo

[The Steps of Breath Meditation](#) - by Thanissaro Bhikkhu

[The Basic Method of Meditation](#) - by Ajahn Brahm

[Mindfulness of Breathing](#) - by Pa Auk Sayadaw

[Anapana Sati - Meditation on Breathing](#) - Bhante Mahathera Nauyane Ariyadhamma

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